

REMARKS

Claims 1-15 remain pending in the application. Claims 1, 2, 4-7, 9, 10 and 12-14 have been amended. Reconsideration of the rejection and allowance of the pending application in view of the following remarks are respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-5, 7-13 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Takai et al. (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0029096). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection for at least the following reasons.

Applicants' independent claim 1 recites a central control system that controls multiple air conditioners which includes a central controller connected to the multiple air conditioners through a dedicated line for transmitting and receiving signals using an air conditioner communication protocol. The central controller is configured to connect to a remote controller via an Internet network for transmitting and receiving signals using an Ethernet communication protocol and to receive a control command from the remote controller for the multiple air conditioners. The central control system also includes a protocol converter, that is physically separate from and locally connected to the central controller. The protocol converter converts signals between the Ethernet communication protocol and the air conditioner communication protocol.

Takai is directed towards a management system for an air conditioner. In the system, a personal computer 100 used as a monitoring apparatus is connected via a converter unit 200 to an air conditioner 300. The personal computer 100 is connected to the Internet, to which terminal equipment 700, a

cellular phone 701, and a monitor center 702 are connected. See Figure 4 and paragraph 0047 of Takai.

At page 2 of the Office Action, the Examiner asserts that Takai's terminal equipment 700, cellular phone 701, and monitor center 702 correspond to Applicants' claimed central controller. Applicants respectfully submit that Takai's terminal equipment 700, cellular phone 701, and monitor center 702 are not configured to connect to a remote controller via an Internet network and receive a control command from the remote controller for the air conditioner 300, as recited in Applicants' independent claim 1.

At page 3 of the Office Action, the Examiner asserts that Takai's personal computer 100 and converter unit 200 together correspond to Applicants' claimed protocol converter. Applicants respectfully submit that Takai's personal computer 100 and converter unit 200 are not locally connected to Takai's terminal equipment 700, cellular phone 701, or monitor center 702. Rather, Applicants submit that Takai's personal computer 100 is connected to Takai's terminal equipment 700, cellular phone 701, and monitor center 702. See Figure 4 of Takai.

Thus, Applicants respectfully submit Takai fails to disclose, or even suggest, a central control system that includes a central controller that is configured to connect to a remote controller via an Internet network and receive a control command from the remote controller for the multiple air conditioners, and a protocol converter, that is physically separate from and locally connected to the central controller, which converts signals between an Ethernet communication protocol and an air conditioner communication protocol, as

recited in Applicants' independent claim 1.

Applicants' independent claim 7 recites a method of operating a central control system for multiple air conditioners which includes, inter alia, receiving, by a central controller, a control command for the multiple air conditioners that is transmitted from a remote controller over an Internet network, and transmitting, by the central controller, the control command to a protocol converter, that is physically separate from and locally connected to the central controller.

At page 4 of the Office Action, the Examiner asserts that Takai's monitor center 702 corresponds to Applicants' claimed central controller, and Takai's terminal equipment 700 or cellular phone 701 corresponds to Applicants' claimed remote controller. Applicants respectfully submit that such a position is erroneous as Takai at least fails to disclose any interaction or communication between the monitor center 702 and the terminal equipment 700 or cellular phone 701, much less disclose that the monitor center 702 receives a control command for air conditioner 300 from terminal equipment 700 or cellular phone 701 which is required by Applicants' claim 7.

Further, as discussed above, Applicants submit that Takai's personal computer 100 and converter unit 200 are not locally connected to Takai's monitor center 702, as recited in Applicants' claim 7.

Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that Takai fails to disclose, let alone suggest, a method of operating a central control system for multiple air conditioners which includes, inter alia, receiving, by a central controller, a control command for the multiple air conditioners that is transmitted from a

remote controller over an Internet network, and transmitting, by the central controller, the control command to a protocol converter, physically separate from and locally connected to the central controller, as recited in Applicants' independent claim 7.

Applicants' independent claim 9 recites a central control system that controls multiple air conditioners which includes a central controller connected to the multiple air conditioners through a dedicated line that transmits and receives signals using an air conditioner communication protocol. The central controller is configured to connect to a remote controller via a network to transmit and receive signals using an Ethernet communication protocol, and to receive a control command input at a remote location from the remote controller for the multiple air conditioners. The central control system also includes a protocol converter that is locally connected to, and physically separate from, the central controller to convert signals between the Ethernet communication protocol and the air conditioner communication protocol.

As discussed above, Applicants submit that Takai's terminal equipment 700, cellular phone 701, and monitor center 702 are not configured to connect to a remote controller via an external network and receive a control command at a remote location from the remote controller for the air conditioner 300. Applicants further submit that Takai's personal computer 100 and converter unit 200 are not locally connected to Takai's terminal equipment 700, cellular phone 701, or monitor center 702.

Thus, Applicants respectfully submit Takai fails to disclose (or suggest) a central control system which includes a central controller configured to connect

to a remote controller via a network and receive a control command input at a remote location from the remote controller for multiple air conditioners, and a protocol converter, locally connected to and physically separate from the central controller to convert signals between an Ethernet communication protocol and an air conditioner communication protocol, as recited in Applicants' independent claim 9.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that Takai fails to anticipate Applicants' independent claims 1, 7 and 9, and respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the 35 U.S.C. §102(b) rejection and allow claims 1, 7 and 9.

Dependent claims 2-5, 8, 10-13 and 15 are also submitted to be in condition for allowance for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to independent claims 1, 7 and 9. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the rejection set forth against the claims.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 7 and 8 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Masui et al. (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0140637). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection for at least the following reasons.

Masui is directed towards an air conditioner control system which includes a central remote controller 5, and a remote monitor terminal 15. At page 5 of the Office Action, the Examiner asserts that Masui's remote monitor terminal 15 corresponds to Applicants' claimed central controller.

Applicants respectfully submit that Masui's remote monitor terminal 15 does not receive a control command for air conditioners from a remote

controller over an Internet network, as required in Applicants' claim 7. In this regard, Applicants submit that the Examiner does not identify which element of Masui's air conditioner control system he believes to correspond to Applicants' claimed remote controller, and respectfully request that the Examiner clearly identify the element he believes to correspond to Applicants' remote controller if he chooses to maintain the rejection.

Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that Takai fails to disclose or suggest a method of operating a central control system for multiple air conditioners which includes receiving, by a central controller, a control command for the multiple air conditioners that is transmitted from a remote controller over an Internet network, as recited in Applicants' independent claim 7.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that Takai fails to anticipate Applicants' independent claim 7, and respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw this 35 U.S.C. §102(e) rejection and allow claim 7.

Dependent claim 8 is also submitted to be in condition for allowance for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to independent claim 7.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected dependent claims 6 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Takai et al. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection for at least the following reasons.

Applicants respectfully submit that dependent claims 6 and 14 are in condition for allowance at least in view of their dependency on independent claims 1 and 9.

Applicants further respectfully submit that claims 6 and 14 are also allowable because Takai does not disclose (or suggest) that the personal

computer 100 communicates with the terminal equipment 700, cellular phone 701, or monitor center 702 with a cable that is attached at one end to the personal computer 100 and attached at another end to a serial port of the terminal equipment 700, cellular phone 701, or monitor center 702. Thus, Applicants submit the applied reference does not disclose or suggest a protocol converter that communicates with a central controller with a cable attached at one end to the protocol converter and attached at another end to a serial port of the central controller, as recited in claims 6 and 14. Instead, Applicants submit that Takai's personal computer 100 communicates with the terminal equipment 700, cellular phone 701, and monitor center 702 over the Internet, as shown in Takai's Figure 4.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that it is improper to reject claims 6 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over Takai, and respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the rejection and allow claims 6 and 14.

Based on the above, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance, and a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Entry and consideration of the present amendment, reconsideration of the outstanding Office Action, and allowance of the present application and all of the claims therein are respectfully requested and now believed to be appropriate. Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present invention in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so.

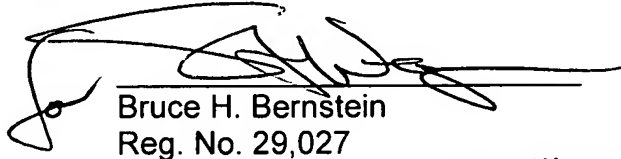
Any amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment,

and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should an extension of time be necessary to maintain the pendency of this application, including any extensions of time required to place the application in condition for allowance by an Examiner's Amendment, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fee to Deposit Account No. 19-0089.

Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding this response, or the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
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May 8, 2006
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